

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MBFR V 00633 170016Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
----- 035905 /60
P 161810Z DEC 76
FM USDEL MBFR VIENNA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1899

S E C R E T MBFR VIENNA 0633

EXDIS

NOFORN

DEPT PASS DEFENSE

FROM US REP MBFR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, NATO
SUBJ: MBFR: BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET DEPREP OF DEC 16,
1976

1. SOVIET DEPREP SHUSTOV SPOKE TO US REP ON THE MARGIN OF THE FINAL PLENARY SESSION. SHUSTOV REFERRED TO DEC 15 BILATERAL DISCUSSION WITH US REPS (SEPTTEL) AND SAID THAT HE REALIZED SOME SHARP WORDS HAD BEEN EXCHANGED. HE SAID IN SPITE OF THIS, WITH REFERENCE TO US REP'S REMARKS AT THE BILATERAL DISCUSSION, HE WANTED US REP TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE SOVIETS WERE SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN SEEKING AN ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT AND HE WANTED US REP TO CONVEY TO WASHINGTON THIS FACT. HE SAID THAT SOVIET REPS RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR THE EAST TO MOVE BUT THAT THEY WANTED TO BE SURE THAT IF THEY DID MOVE, IT WOULD BE RECIPROCATED.

2. US REP SAID THAT HE WANTED TO BE SURE THAT SOVIET REPS UNDERSTOOD THAT IN ASSESSING AT THIS TIME THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NEGOTIATIONS, WASHINGTON WOULD BE LOOKING AT THE ABSENCE OF
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ANY SOVIET MOVES CHANGING THE OUTCOME FROM ITS ORIGINAL 1973 PROPOSAL AND, THUS, THERE WOULD BE LACKING ANY HARD EVIDENCE OF SOVIET INTEREST IN TRYING TO REACH AN ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT.

3. SHUSTOV SAID THAT SOVIET TABLING OF DATA HAD BEEN A MAJOR DEPARTURE FROM PRIOR PRACTICE AND SHOWED SOVIET INTEREST.

US REP REPLIED THAT THE FACT THAT THE DATA WHICH HAD BEEN TABLED APPARENTLY OMITTED A LARGE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL DETRACTED FROM THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MOVE AND STILL LEFT UNCLEAR THE QUESTION OF SOVIET INTEREST IN AN ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT.

4. SHUSTOV SAID THAT THERE WAS A PROBLEM FOR THE SOVIETS IN MOVING BEFORE THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD MADE ITS ASSESSMENT.

5. SHUSTOV REPEATED SEVERAL TIMES THAT THE US AND THE SOVIETS WERE IN A SPECIAL POSITION IN THE TALKS AND THAT THERE SHOULD BE BILATERAL EFFORTS BETWEEN THEM TO MAKE PROGRESS. HE VOLUNTEERED THAT HE FULLY RECOGNIZED THAT THE TALKS WERE MULTILATERAL AND THAT THIS LIMITED THE ABILITY OF THE TWO MAJOR POWERS TO INFLUENCE PROGRESS.

6. US REP RESPONDED THAT IT WAS UP TO THE SOVIETS BY THEIR ACTIONS TO MAKE CLEAR TO THE WEST EUROPEANS THE WILLINGNESS OF THE SOVIETS TO SEEK AN ACCEPTABLE AGREEMENT AND THAT THE US COULD NOT BE IN A POSITION OF TRYING TO PERSUADE ITS ALLIES TO MOVE.

7. SHUSTOV SAID THAT HE THOUGHT THE COMING DATA DISCUSSION WOULD HELP OBTAIN PROGRESS. HE SAID, HOWEVER, THAT HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE WEST WOULD MAKE STATEMENTS TO THE PRESS ABOUT ALLEGED SOVIET MANPOWER INCREASES DURING THE NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID THIS WOULD BE VERY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND WOULD REQUIRE THE SOVIET MINISTRIES TO MAKE FORMAL STATEMENTS WHICH THEY COULD ARRANGE TO BE PLACED IN THE PRESS. HE ADDED THAT HE REALIZED THAT US REP COULD NOT CONTROL WESTERN PRESS LEAKS BUT HE AGAIN STRESSED THAT THEY WOULD IMPEDE PROGRESS. HE SAID THAT BOTH
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SIDES SHOULD WITHHOLD DATA FROM THE PRESS UNTIL PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN REACHING A COMMON UNDERSTANDING ON DATA.

8. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH SHUSTOV ON SAME DATE, US DEPREP TOLD LATTER HE WAS SURE SOVIETS WOULD AVOID MAKING A MAJOR ISSUE OVER THE ABSENCE OF THE FRENCH FROM THE WESTERN FIGURES. SHUSTOV SAID SOVIETS HAD EVERY INTENTION OF BEING CAREFUL ON THIS SUBJECT. HE POINTED OUT THAT TARASOV'S QUESTION ABOUT WHO WAS INCLUDED IN THE DEC 15 INFORMAL HAD INTENTIONALLY NOT EVEN MENTIONED THE FRENCH.

9. SHUSTOV WENT BACK OVER QUESTIONS SOVIET REPS HAD RAISED IN BILATERAL DISCUSSION WITH US REPS DEC 15 (SEPTEL). HE SAID, AS HE UNDERSTOOD IT, THE WEST WOULD BE REDUCING FROM 791,000 TO A 700,000 COMMON CEILING AND THE EAST WOULD GO DOWN FROM ITS TOTAL TO THE SAME 700,000 CEILING. US DEPREP SAID US REPS HAD POINTED OUT ON PREVIOUS DAY THAT THE STARTING FIGURE FOR COMPUTING REDUCTIONS WOULD DEPEND ON THE DATE SELECTED FOR AGREEMENT

AND THAT REDUCTIONS WOULD THEN BE TO A COMMON CEILING WHOSE PRECISE LEVEL WAS FIXED BY AGREEMENT. BUT SHUSTOV HAD THE RIGHT CONCEPT AS REGARDS HOW WESTERN REDUCTIONS WOULD BE CALCULATED. SHUSTOV ASKED WHETHER, IF THE COMMON CEILING WERE SET AT 700,000 MEN FOR EACH SIDE BUT THE FRENCH WERE NOT INCLUDED IN WESTERN FIGURES, THIS WOULD THEN MEAN THAT THE WEST COULD EXPAND ITS FORCES BY 60,000 MEN. USDEPREP SAID THIS WAS NOT THE WESTERN INTENTION.

10. SHUSTOV MADE THE SAME POINT ABOUT AVOIDING PUBLICITY ON DATA WHICH HE RAISED WITH THE US REP. HE ALSO SAID THE SOVIETS WERE PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE WITH REGARD TO AN AGREEMENT ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT WISH TO COMMIT HIMSELF ON INDIVIDUAL POINTS NOW. HE ALSO SAID THAT EASTERN PARTICIPANTS WOULD BE PREPARED TO DISCUSS DATA AND COUNTING RULES AT THE OUTSET OF THE NEXT SESSION. (COMMENT: IN AD HOC GROUP MEETING AFTERNOON OF DEC 16, FRG REP SAID SOVIET MILITARY ADVISER KAPITONOV HAD TOLD FRG DEL ON DEC 15 THAT THE EAST WOULD ANSWER THE FIVE
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WESTERN QUESTIONS POSED IN THE JUNE 29 INFORMAL SESSION AT THE OUTSET OF THE NEXT ROUND. END COMMENT.)RESOR

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, MUTUAL FORCE REDUCTIONS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 DEC 1976
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MBFRV00633
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760463-0858
From: MBFR VIENNA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761237/aaaabfwm.tel
Line Count: 141
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 MAR 2004 by hartledg>; APPROVED <13 AUG 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MBFR: BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SOVIET DEPREP OF DEC 16, 1976
TAGS: PARM, US, UR, NATO, MBFR
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006